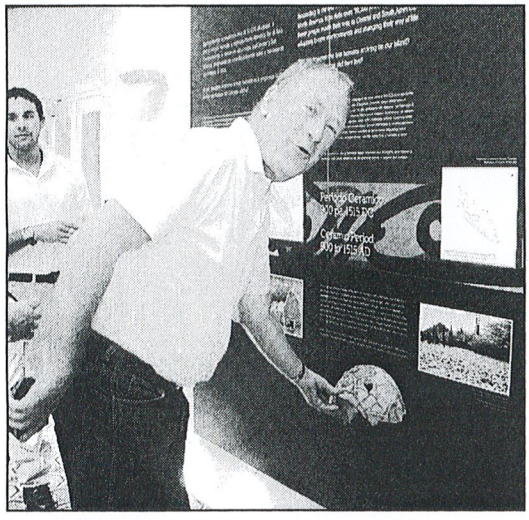
A glimpse at Aruba's new Archaeology Museum

The staff of the museum.



Yes! Please touch.

Morph pot

Nearly three years after breaking ground, Aruba's Archaeology Museum at Schelpstraat 42 is nearly ready to officially open. Administrators and museum staff welcomed island media to give a preview of what is to come, and will welcome 300 visitors this coming Sunday, March 29, during a special open house prior to the official opening on July 26, during the Dutch Kingdom Games to be held on Aruba this year.

Since the number of visitors to be welcomed to the museum on Sunday is limited, those interested in attending must first go to the museum tomorrow between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. to register and obtain a ticket. First come, first serve. Distribution of tickets began this afternoon at 2:30 p.m.; they allow a one hour entrance to the museum and guided tour times will be at 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. and noon, with 100 visitors in the museum at a time. A maximum of five tickets will be allotted per person.

A preview of the new exhibits revealed a highly interactive display calculated to engage the attention and stimulate interest in all ages. Aruba's archaeology team has uncovered a diverse collection of artifacts and remains, and the museum has been arranged to give a realistic picture of the culture and everyday life of the island's original Amerindian population.

Welcoming visiting journalists was Head Curator Arminda Fecunda-Ruiz with Marguerite Wever of the museum's educational department and Margriet Lee, who will handle the grand opening. Head Archaeologist Raymond Dijkoff with his team, Harold Kelly and Hiram Angela helped to answer particular questions regarding the exhibits.

Texts accompanying the exhibits are in English and Papiamento, and there are media presentations in both languages as well. Art and film play an important part in the recreation and recounting of the life on Aruba over 1000 years ago; A fascinating film from the Field Museum in Chicago featuring Professor Tim Kohler of the Department of Anthropology of Washington State University provides insight into ancient Amerindian communities and how they co-existed with the environment.

After Sunday's open house the staff expressed they might perhaps host other such events, but until the grand opening they will for the most part only be visited by specialized stakeholders to receive their input in tweaking the museum for optimal effectiveness. Artists, curators, educational experts and those involved with the handicapped are expected to comment and critique in which way the museum can best serve all aspects of the community, including how exhibits can be appreciated by those that are physically impaired. Depending on the success of Sunday's open house, they may again stage similar days for visits by the public, which will be announced in advance. For more information call 582-8979.